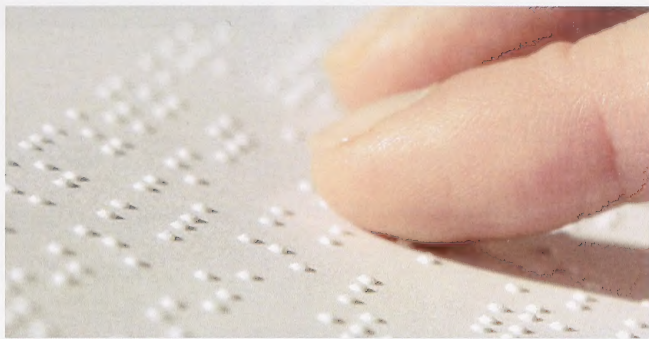


# Disability in FOCUS

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JUNE 2010

## Message from the Chair



As the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities begins its third decade, it is a privilege to be greeting you once again as Chair.

We enter 2010 with renewed energy and commitment to work towards the Premier's Council's

vision that *Alberta Is an Inclusive and Barrier Free Society*.

Premier's Council has developed a Strategic Plan that aligns with government's business plans. The Premier's Council's Strategic Plan guides our work in the coming years and allows for flexibility to adjust alongside a changing environment.

The key Strategic Direction in the Premier's Council's plan is: *Alberta is the model for best practices in universal access*. Progress has been made in responding to disability issues associated with accessibility and accommodation. This momentum could be supported by the creation of a more systematic, consistent and encompassing approach to Universal Design.

As Albertans with disabilities are able to more fully

access their communities, all Albertans will develop an increased appreciation of the contributions and connections of Albertans with disabilities.

The Premier's Council believes that most citizens need some type of adaptation to their surroundings during their lifetime and, as such, this work will have widespread benefits.

The Premier's Council has formed two committees that will assist in putting the Strategic Plan into action. The first committee has focused on initiatives related to Universal Design and the second on improving employment opportunities for Albertans with disabilities.

As always, we look forward to working towards our Vision. Being more active in communities, listening effectively to citizens, and engaging the government and other partners will support the achievement of inclusive communities.

**Marlin Styner**

**Government  
of Alberta**



**THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL**  
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

# Vision

Alberta is an inclusive and barrier-free society.

# Mission

The mission of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is to advise on, report to and make recommendations to the Government of Alberta on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the Province. It does this by listening to the opinions of the disability community, communicating these ideas and concerns to the Government of Alberta and the broader community, and working with governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders towards solutions.

***“Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.”***

—Helen Keller





# Message from the Minister



The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities plays a very important role in our province

As the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, I am pleased with the work the

Premier's Council has done over the past year communicating issues of interest to the disability community. My regular meetings with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Premier's Council include updates on the progress being made on the Premier's Council's new Strategic Plan. The focus on activities to promote Universal Access and Design will help make it easier for all Albertans to participate in our communities.

I want to express my appreciation for MLA Fred Horne's contributions to the Premier's Council's plans and activities. Until March 2010, Mr. Horne was Council's Deputy Chair. He has now been appointed as Parliamentary Assistant for Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, and his experience with the Premier's Council is just one of the assets he brings to this role.

I am pleased that Verlyn Olson, MLA for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, will act as the new Deputy Chair. I am certain that Mr. Olson will work closely with the Chair,

Marlin Styner, as the Premier's Council continues its essential work to address the concerns of people with disabilities in Alberta. The Deputy Chair acts as a direct liaison to the government and will make certain that your elected officials are aware of the Premier's Council's work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the recipients of the 2009 Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities' Awards of Excellence. I had the distinct pleasure of presenting two of the awards in Edmonton during International Day of Persons with Disabilities' celebrations. It was very encouraging to be in a room full of people who are so dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Albertans with disabilities.

I know there are many other Albertans who share the Premier's Council's passion for inclusion. I invite you to communicate, and to work with each other, government, Premier's Council and other Albertans so that persons with disabilities can contribute and participate in the vibrant life of our wonderful province.

***Honourable Mary Anne Jablonski***



# What is the Premier's Council?

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is a group of individuals who have a demonstrated commitment to assisting people with disabilities. Our passion for disability issues are as diverse as our members.

Our role is to provide advice to the Government of Alberta on issues concerning persons with disabilities. We try to reflect the ideas and concerns that we hear from the Albertans in our communities.

As a council, we have developed a Business Plan with defined goals and objectives that has been accepted by the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and the Premier. Committees work on the activities outlined in the Strategic Plan, and provide updates to the Premier's Council at our monthly teleconferences.

Some of the issues that we have discussed include the promotion of universal access, recommendations on the future of health care in Alberta, changes to special education and ideas to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Our council provides input based on our experiences, backgrounds and information we gather from the public. If you wish to provide information to the Premier's Council about an issue that concerns you, or an idea for improvement, please use the contact information provided in this newsletter.

## **Premier's Council Members**

Marlin Styner, Chair – Red Deer  
Verlyn Olson, Deputy Chair, and  
MLA Wetaskiwin/Camrose  
Dan Bojarski – St. Brides  
Bryce Clarke – Ardrossan  
Mike Hambly – Calgary  
Dr. John Latter – Calgary  
Austin Mardon – Edmonton  
Diane Ridley – Thorsby  
Brad Robertson – Calgary  
Amber Skoog – Stirling  
Kuen Tang – Edmonton  
Pamela Wagner – Medicine Hat  
Carmen Wyton – St. Albert

More details about the history, members and work of the Premier's Council on the Status of Person's with Disabilities are available at:

[www.seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil](http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil)





# Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Awards of Excellence

*Recognizing outstanding leadership in making positive, progressive and sustained change toward full inclusion of people with disabilities in our province.*

Every year, awards are presented by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities to honour Albertans whose outstanding leadership has changed the lives of people with disabilities. The Awards of Excellence are presented at International Day of Persons with Disabilities' (IDPD) celebrations around the province.

Since December 3, 2002, the Premier's Council has observed IDPD. This worldwide celebration of persons with disabilities was declared by the United Nations in 1992. It continues to be a time of year aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of disability by celebrating people with disabilities and those who support them.

The 2010, IDPD events throughout the province will be taking place on or around December 3rd in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. You can find information regarding this significant celebration on the Premier's Council's website.

## **Recipients of the 2009 Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Awards of Excellence:**

- **Les Pearson**  
Gary McPherson Leadership Award
- **Dave Storey & Don Carruthers Den Hoed**  
Public Awareness
- **Camp Health, Hope & Happiness**  
Community Awareness
- **Quincelle Duce**  
Employment
- **Brenda Reitsma**  
Education

Nomination forms will be available in the summer of 2010,  
at the Premier's Council website at:

[www.seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil](http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil)

or call 1-800-272-8841



# Highlights from International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 2009

*Nothing about us without us...Increasing awareness, understanding and support*

Grande Prairie celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) by organizing a Trade Fair, featuring 11 exhibitors. Presentations included paragliding, ballet, a guitar player and a video presentation of Nick Vujicic, a motivational speaker with multiple disabilities. The evening began with a dinner theatre, followed by a proclamation by Mayor Dwight Logan and a wheelchair dance demonstration by Explosion Dance Society. The Award of Excellence in Public Awareness was presented to Dave Storey during the festivities.



Diane Ridley (left) of the Premier's Council presents the Public Awareness Award to Dave Storey in Grande Prairie.



During Calgary's IDPD events, recipients were recognized for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility (ACA) Awards.

Front row, left to right: Jack Smart; Bonnie Pacaud, ACA Advocacy award recipient; Deputy Mayor Ray Jones.

Back row: Barb Higgins, CTV news; Denise Young and Colleen Houston



Calgary festivities included a Trade Show, organized at City Hall with local disability agencies. The Keynote address was provided by Barb Higgins, with entertainment provided by the Disability Action Hall, which included a dance and comedy skit. The event was such a success that it will be expanded in 2010 to include more participants. During the afternoon, "Freak Out," a festival designed to create a cultural place for the arts and for people with disabilities, was held at the Calgary Public Library.

In Medicine Hat, local organizers, agency staff and volunteers delivered a broad-based, experiential learning session to an audience of 500 children at a local school. A series of presentations focused on bringing awareness to many facets of disabilities. They were titled: Let's Eat (G-tube feeding), Let's Talk (sign language), Let's Go (wheelchair usage), Let's Adapt (adapted speaking, eating and exercise), Let's Read (stories about children with disabilities), Let's Feel (autism awareness) and Let's Think (brain injury awareness).

Fort McMurray celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities by providing entertainment with Kids on the Block Puppet Shows to children of all ages.

Lethbridge hosted a Trade Show featuring a variety of employers and organizations that contribute to the disability services sector. Organizers set up an obstacle course simulating barriers faced by people with disabilities. A panel made up of representatives from the disability community followed the activity and promoted a positive discussion on success stories and mentorship.

Red Deer held IDPD in conjunction with Parkland mall's VIP Recognition Day to salute Central Alberta's seniors and citizens with disabilities. A Trade Fair was hosted with 30 booths representing agencies that serve people with disabilities. Former Olympian, Milaine Theriault, delivered a Keynote address, and the Olympic torch was present. In addition, two presentations were given, one by Special Olympics Red Deer and one by international wheelchair athlete, Tammy Cunningham.



Two-time Olympian, Milaine Theriault, right, with Harvey Toews at the Red Deer IDPD celebration.



International wheelchair athlete, Red Deer's Tammy Cunningham holds the Olympic torch at the Red Deer IDPD celebration.



Edmonton events took place at City Hall with an Information Fair and networking reception. An Art Show was organized by the Alberta Artists with Brain Injury Society and Chrysalis. Master Corporal Paul Franklin provided the Keynote address, and the Edmonton Musical Theatre Group, Choral Morphosis and Comedian Susan Wirtanen provided the entertainment. The Honorable Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, Fred Horne, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, and Edmonton City Councillor, Tony Caterina spoke at the event. In addition, two Awards of Excellence were presented: one to Camp He Ho Ha for Community and one to Brenda Reitsma for Education.



Edmonton:  
Back row left to right: Phyllis Kobasiuk, President of Camp He Ho Ha, Award of Excellence in Community recipient; Angela Russell and Eileen McEwen, IDPD Planning Committee Members; City Councillor, Tony Caterina; Andrea Laura, IDPD planning committee; Erin Isfeld, CTV Edmonton; Marc Quinn, Karen Quinn and Leslie Tanzi, IDPD planning committee; the Honorable Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports; MLA Fred Horne, Premier's Council Deputy Chair; Brenda Reitsma, Award of Excellence in Education recipient.  
Front row: Ross Norton, MC and Kuen Tang, Premier's Council.

# Committee Updates

Committees support the mission and vision of the Premier's Council.

## Policy and Program Review Committee

The Policy and Program Review Committee is a standing committee with the role of providing leadership on the review of the policies and procedures belonging to the Premier's Council. In this capacity, the committee has had a very busy few months.

In anticipation of the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act (APAGA) the committee has brought forward a new Mandate and Roles document, a new Code of Conduct, and a new recruitment process and evaluation process for the Premier's Council's approval. Updating these documents provided an opportunity to ensure that our policies and procedures are consistent with the council's commitment to persons with disabilities and will allow for accountability of the Premier's Council.

This committee also had the opportunity to provide input for Setting the Direction (the Special Education review) and the Advisory Committee on Health.

It has been my pleasure to hold the position of Chair on this committee for the past five years. I applaud not only the commitment of my fellow committee members and the Premier's Council, but also the dedicated members of the Secretariat. Together, we all work towards a barrier-free Alberta.

***Diane Ridley***

## Communications Committee

In January of this year, I was pleased to take on the role of Chair of the Communications Committee.

The work of the Communications Committee includes:

- Developing communications items, such as:
  - the Communications Strategy
  - newsletters, brochures, displays and annual reports.
- Reviewing and making recommendations to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference.
- Creating and implementing the process for the nomination and selection of the Awards of Excellence winners.

The Communications Committee successfully met one of the Premier's Council's Business Plan goals for this year when it received more than twice the number of nominations for the Awards of Excellence than had been received last year. Further improvements are expected and will include continued enhancements in the public relations activities for the Awards of Excellence nominations and announcements, as well as development of criteria to help with the selection of award recipients.

In addition, the Communications Committee will continue to gather input and recommendations for the newsletter. If you would like to provide comments, please see the contact information on the back page.

***Mike Hambly***





### Employment Committee

The Employment Committee was formed in December 2009 to focus on the Strategic Plan Goal: "Persons with disabilities are represented and supported in employment across Alberta."

The first initiative toward this goal is collaboration with other organizations to determine methods to promote employment of persons with disabilities across the province. Capitalizing on networks and relationships that are already well established, the Committee has found its first partnership for an employment diversity event to be held this spring in Medicine Hat.

***Pamela Wagner***

### Universal Design Committee

The Universal Design Committee was formed in October 2009 following the approval of Premier's Council's Strategic Plan. This committee's purpose is to promote and model the concept of Universal Design in Alberta.

The work of the Universal Design Committee includes:

- develop a Universal Design presentation,
- re-establish the Promoting Universal Design Committee, and
- provide advice to the Government of Alberta on Universal Design concepts.

The committee members are very eager and dedicated to development and implementation strategies to promote Universal Design.

***Kuen Tang***

# Universal Design

People with disabilities are living longer, healthier lives.

We are participating in our communities, going to school, working and playing alongside the rest of the population. Life spans are increasing for everyone and, as such, senior populations are growing. All of this means that the issues being faced by people with disabilities are now being faced by a much larger portion of the population.

People with mobility, sensory and intellectual disabilities have long advocated for barrier-free design and accessibility. It is now recognized that a concept that addresses the daily needs of all people, with and without disabilities, would provide social, economic and societal benefits for everyone.

According to the Center for Universal Design, Universal Design is the design of products, environments and communications to be as usable as possible, by as many people as possible.

Universal Design is much more than ramps and automatic doors. It is adjusting menus to make them easier to read by increasing the size of the letters and the colour contrast between the words and the paper. It is making instructions, textbooks and lessons easier to understand, and designing equipment and tools so they are easier to use. It is also making adjustments to buildings and houses so that people with disabilities and seniors can enter and move around in them.

The key concepts that govern Universal Design can also help to explain it.

Universal Design:

- 1) Accommodates as many individuals as possible.
- 2) Does more than "meet the code."
- 3) Creates "choice."
- 4) Is invisible.
- 5) Is adaptable, flexible and sustainable (part of the design process from the start).
- 6) Has economic benefits.
- 7) Includes the needs of aging community members.
- 8) Promotes inclusion: the design should not look like a hospital setting.
- 9) Has emotional value: Universal Design does not limit options. It adds value to the design.

As architects and designers began working with the concept of Universal Design, they discovered that many of the changes needed to accommodate people with disabilities actually benefit everyone.

The Premier's Council's Vision is: "Alberta is an inclusive and barrier-free society", and we believe that Universal Design is essential to the achievement of this Vision.

More information about the Centre for Universal Design can be found at: [www.design.ncsu.edu/cud](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud)





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Cartoon created by Premier's Council board member, Kuen Tang

# A Universal Approach to Learning

What if you weren't able to open a door? Or, what if walking up a flight of stairs posed great difficulty for you? You would probably become aware of the concept of Universal Design.

But what if you had difficulties learning? Where would you turn? Fortunately, most students who have difficulty learning can access academic accommodations or modified materials which help to minimize their barriers.

But what if they didn't have to? What if these students could learn in the same environment as students who don't face barriers? This is the premise of Universal Instructional Design (UID). UID, as presented by the University of Guelph, is based on seven principles:

- 1) Be accessible and fair.
- 2) Provide flexibility in use, participation and presentation.
- 3) Be straightforward and consistent.
- 4) Be explicitly presented and readily perceived.
- 5) Provide a supportive learning environment.
- 6) Minimize unnecessary physical effort or requirements.
- 7) Ensure a learning space that accommodates both students and instructional methods.

The objective of these seven principles is to create a learning environment where all students can maximize their learning experience, while simultaneously minimizing accommodations required by students who have difficulties learning in a conventional way. A lesson plan and evaluation system built on these principles has the potential to facilitate a learning environment that promotes inclusion and equitable learning conditions for all students.

**Amber Skoog**

*All information for this article obtained from the University of Guelph website: [www.tts.uoguelph.ca](http://www.tts.uoguelph.ca)*





# Life and Legacy: A Tribute to Shirley Dupmeier

This past year, Alberta lost one of its most dedicated advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, and many of us lost a mentor and friend.

On December 28, 2009, Shirley Jean Dupmeier passed away, leaving behind a void for those of us who were privileged to know her.

Shirley accepted her disability as a challenge to help others who had to encounter a world without sight. When I think of Shirley, I hear the words of Helen Keller going through my mind: "The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision." Shirley's vision did not come from her eyes; it came from her heart. With her faithful leader dog at her side, it became her personal responsibility to create social awareness of the barriers that persons with disabilities face on a day-to-day basis.

Shirley served as a member of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities from 1993 until 2005. Her contribution to Government policies and programs has helped shape Alberta in its quest to increase opportunities and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

At a community level, Shirley volunteered on the CNIB Board of Directors from 1984 to 1993. In 1992 she received an award from the City of Medicine Hat for her work with CNIB. In 2001 the provincial CNIB awarded her the Euclid Herie Leadership Award.

At the municipal level, Shirley served as a member of several City Advisory Committees, including the Advisory Committee on Disability Issues, the Seniors Advisory Committee and the Transit Advisory Committee.

Shirley was my mentor and friend. Her intelligence and positive personality were inspiring and motivating. For me, she epitomized the words of Helen Keller, "One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar." I thank Shirley for the time and effort that she so graciously gave to improving the lives of those of us with disabilities. There is more work to be done, but Shirley set the vision to guide our path to full inclusion for all citizens.

***Diane Bergeron***



Shirley with her leader dog.

*The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is committed to working towards an inclusive, barrier-free society where every Albertan has the opportunity and choice to participate in school, in the workplace and in the community.*



The Premier's Council produces *Disability in Focus*, which is available upon request in alternative formats including large print, audiotape, text only and Braille. *Disability in Focus* is also available electronically and online.

The Secretariat that supports the Premier's Council includes:

Louise Butler: Director

Diane Bergeron: Manager, Coordination and Council Initiatives

Bonnie Edwards: Coordinator

Audrey Walton: Administrative Assistant

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#### **What do you think of our newsletter?**

Please send comments or questions to Bonnie Edwards:

[bonnie.edwards@gov.ab.ca](mailto:bonnie.edwards@gov.ab.ca)

780 - 422 -1095

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